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Women of color in the South African workforce: workplace bias and its consequences.

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Table of contents

Abstract	**2**
Introduction	**3**
Statement of Purpose	3
Background of the study	3
Research Problem	4
Research Objectives	6
Rationale of the study	6
Delimitations of the study	7
Structure of the Dissertation	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	**9**
Introduction of the Literature Review	9
Theoretical Framework	13
Conceptual Framework	19
Conclusion of Literature Review	20
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	**21**
Introduction	21
Research Design	23
Data Collection	24
Data Analysis strategies and Interpretation	26
Quality Assurance	28
Ethical Considerations	28
RESULTS	**30**
Demographic Characteristics	30
Workplace Bias and Experiences	30
Stress Levels and Coping Strategies	31
Credibility and Validity	32
DISCUSSION	**34**
Workplace Bias Impact	34
Stress Response behaviours	35
Organisational Intervention	36
CONCLUSION	**39**
APPENDICES	**41**
Survey Questionnaire guide	42
Research Plan (schedule of activities to 28/02/2024)	53
Reference List	54

Abstract

This research study investigates the significance of women of colour in the South African workplace by examining the impact of workplace bias and its consequences. The study takes an intersectional approach, considering the unique experiences and challenges faced by women of color in the workforce. The transactional model of coping and multi-level bias theories are employed to analyse the coping mechanisms employed by women of color and the organizational and societal factors that contribute to bias. This research utilizes a qualitative survey methodology, specifically targeting MBA women of color from Wits Business School, who are employed in various industries across South Africa. The survey aims to capture data on participants' experiences of workplace bias, coping strategies, and the consequences of bias on their professional growth and well-being.

Data collection from the survey questionnaire will be analysed using thematic analysis techniques to examine the correlation between workplace bias, coping strategies, and outcomes such as career advancement, job satisfaction, and mental health. The study seeks to identify the specific types of bias experienced by women of color and explore how these biases impact their career trajectories and overall well-being. Study findings are expected to provide a better comprehension of the difficulties faced by women of colour in the South African workforce and shed light on the effectiveness of coping strategies in mitigating the negative consequences of bias. Moreover, the research aims to provide insights for organizations and policymakers to develop interventions and strategies that promote inclusivity and equality in the workplace, leading to a more diverse and equitable workforce in South Africa.

Keywords: Women of color, South African workforce, Workplace bias, Intersectionality, Transactional model of coping, multi-level bias theories, Qualitative survey, Thematic analysis.

Introduction

Statement of Purpose

This research employs a qualitative approach to investigate how workplace bias, specifically related to intersectionality, affects women of color in the workplace.

Background of the Study

Throughout history gender inequality has been a hot topic that sought to examine the impacts of bias on social, cultural, and economic rights of women (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Conversely, gender equality movements sought to liberate women from the perceived inferiority to men (Merchant, 2012). Dating back to the late 18th century, feminist movements have fought for inclusion and participation of women in politics, to have a right to vote, for gender, race, social and legal equality (Merchant, 2012). Despite the advancements of feminists and liberation movements, women in the workforce continue to face stereotypic views, which force them to act in a manner that is acceptable to society (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Descriptive gender stereotyping remains a persistent concept in current workforce environments, despite the strides of women in leadership to illustrate otherwise (Phelan and Rudman, 2010). The 'rules' adopted from this stereotype perceive women as warm, modest, and amiable while men are observed as assertive, competent, and ambitious (Phelan and Rudman, 2010). These perceptions are a hurdle to gender equality in the workplace (Phelan and Rudman, 2010). Women in leadership roles compete against men perceived to possess innate abilities to lead, hence, women are forced to illustrate a facade of unquestionable 'fit for the role' behaviour (Phelan and Rudman, 2010). Moreover, barriers like the glass ceiling effect and gender pay gaps continue to hinder women from reaching executive levels within their organisations (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Gender stereotyping is biased towards men, providing them with access to power and resources otherwise deprived to women, this affects the leadership roles and communication styles of women (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Consequently, the deprivation of equal opportunity due to workplace bias influences the behavior and work outcome presented by women (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Workplace bias thus creates hostile work environments that induce social conflict amongst employees due to psychological differences observed through descriptive stereotyping (Phelan and Rudman, 2010 (Plickert and Sterling, 2017).

There is a burgeoning consciousness on the factors affecting job performance of women in the workplace. Productivity contributes significantly towards economic development and

growth, through gross domestic product output (Zulu and Banda, 2015). Productivity is observed at 11% lower in females compared to their male counterparts (Islam et al., 2020). These asymmetrical productivity gaps indicate the limited mobilisation of human capital resources for effective work performance contributions by women (Islam et al., 2020). Globally, women struggle to secure employment compared to men. These numbers are exacerbated in developing countries with elevated levels of unemployment such as South Africa (Africa, 2022). Over a 10-year period (2012-2022), there is a 11.4% gap in labour force participation in favour of men (Africa, 2022). Women absorption rate into the labour force is 9.2% lower than their male counterparts. Women able to secure employment, are presented with hostile working environment characterised by low productivity and inadequate pay (Africa, 2022). These factors are the main cause of emotional and behavioural responses which have negative impacts on the physical and mental well-being of individuals experiencing discrimination ((Carter and Forsyth, 2010)

Research Problem

Workplace bias is perpetuated by gender stereotyping (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). Media, education systems and South Africa's patriarchal culture history continue to feed the norm of prejudice by expecting women to conform to the deemed acceptable behaviour and perceived normalcy observed in men within managerial positions (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Furthermore, women face a social identity crisis that influences their process of decision-making and behaviour within the workplace (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). The obligatory conformance to the status quo, sighting the belief that female leaders respond better and are effective during crisis compared to their male counterparts embeds female leaders with troubleshooting mindsets (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). Imposed troubleshooting perspectives on female leaders form a bias that affect their emotions, behavior and inevitably the productivity of the organisation (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). Organizational success is not only the result of financial measures; social contribution, employee satisfaction and efficacy are also crucial to the productivity of an organisation (Hoang et al., 2021). It is imperative to place a focus on the emotional status and behavior of employees to ensure effective coping mechanisms, policies and interventions are put in place to support individuals discriminated against (Carter and Forsyth, 2010).

Female leadership and entrepreneurship are essential for economic growth (Hoang et al., 2021). However, female performance is undervalued at managerial levels based on gender

stereotyping (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021). There is pressure for females to maintain a work-life balance while underpinned by domestic responsibilities limiting the time and labour that could be devoted to business activities, which yield efficiency and productivity is immense (Hoang et al., 2021). The pressure by hostile work environments, prompts women to move to business industries men find unattractive, further immersing themselves in slow growth, low profitability, and productivity businesses sectors (Hoang et al., 2021). In the same breath, a dwindling number of women develop small to medium enterprises, to financially support their families (Hoang et al., 2021). However, they are met with low capital investment opportunities compared to their male counterparts, limiting growth for female owned businesses (Hoang et al., 2021). Moreover, majority of females retain employment in bias workplace environments due to benefits such as paid leave and subsidized childcare (Hoang et al., 2021). The work-life balance pressure, hostile working environments, minimal support from investors on their business, being undervalued in managerial roles, all contribute to creating anxiety, animosity, and elevated levels of mental ill-health in working women (Tabassum and Nayak, 2021).

Multilevel workplace bias considers individual and organizational level theories placing the focus on not only the systems and structures of the organisation but on the behavior and mindset of the organisation members (Stephens et al., 2021). The application of varied research theories must be investigated to comprehend the social environment, behavioral, and management impacts that influence bias, which subsequently effect the emotional response and behavior of women (Stephens et al., 2021). Considerable work is required to revamp organizational policies and systems that exhibit and promote masculine ideas within organisations (Stephens et al., 2021). Patriarchal perspectives evaluate women as less merit, group reliant and lack firmness due to embedded bias within the workplace systems, structures, and policies (Stephens et al., 2021). Response to the bias, particularly at the individual level, must focus and reduce stereotypes that result in the cognitive association of women with automatic descriptive stereotyping and aim to limit the mental ill-health and negative behavior caused by the bias (Stephens et al., 2021). These measures will aid reduce the negative emotional impacts experienced by women in the workplace. However, the reduction of workplace bias particularly at the individual level does not suffice or effectively promote positive emotional responses and behavior in women. A focus on workplace inclusion will ensure high performance organizations with engaged and empowered employees (Stephens et al., 2021).

Research Objectives

This research paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Assess the professional impact of workplace bias on women of color in the South African workforce.
2. Examine stress response behaviours among women of color in diverse cultural contexts within the workplace.
3. Identify and implement effective organizational interventions to alleviate workplace stressors for women of color, fostering relatability in the South African workforce.

Rationale of the Study

Research on the impacts induced by workplace bias, tend to be isolated studies. These two aspects, workplace bias and emotionally induced behaviour should be coherent. The study by Carter and Forsyth (2010) focuses on the impacts and themes resulting in emotional stress and behavioural responses due to discrimination. Tabassum and Nayak (2021) focus on how gender stereotyping limits female career progressions. These studies are limited to the impacts of workplace bias on the work environment, women are subjected to, and suggest reworking the processes and systems of organisations promote working environments that are inclusive and support work-life balance responsibilities of women. However, the subject on emotions, behaviour, and mental wellbeing of the employees because of the work environments are lacking. Research by (Stephens et al., 2021), not only proposes the revamping of organisational systems and structures but observes the individual level impacts of workplace bias. The research combines the environmental impacts with the behaviour of employees and how these two sectors can foster interactions between members of the organisation (Stephens et al., 2021).

The most disadvantaged individual in South Africa is a young, Black female ("Black Women: Unseen Superheroes of the Workplace," 2022). This demographic is faced with added responsibilities, unconscious bias, limited support, and resources ("Black Women: Unseen Superheroes of the Workplace," 2022). Organisations fail to see the value of investing in females, particularly the young and black. Underestimating this demographic is limiting South Africa's economic growth due to the immense contributions they could offer productivity in the workplace. The development of SA is lagging due to the disregard of female contributions in the workplace. This research aims to highlight the importance of

reducing workplace bias, creating inclusive environments, and changing the policies, systems, and structures of organisation to enable women to have valuable input and positive emotional association of the workplace that will yield increased productivity and subsequently the economic growth of SA, without being overwhelmed, anxious or despondent.

Delimitations of the Study

The study focuses specifically on the South African workforce, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other countries or regions.

Gender Focus: The study primarily examines the experiences of women of color in the workforce, and while acknowledging the significance of gender, it may not extensively explore the experiences of men of color or women from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Intersectionality Theory: The study delves into the impact of workplace bias on women of color using intersectionality theory, but it will not explore other theoretical frameworks or perspectives in-depth.

Qualitative Approach: The study employs a qualitative survey as the primary method of data collection. While this is valuable for understanding complexity, it may overlook broader social or structural factors that influence behaviour of individual experiences and nuanced aspects of workplace bias.

Sample Selection: The study focuses on MBA students at the Wits Business School, with women of color in management, which may not represent the experiences of women of color across all levels and sectors of the South African workforce.

Limited Timeframe: The study's findings may be limited to the specific time during which data was collected and may not capture evolving dynamics or changes in the South African workforce over time.

Structure of the Dissertation

This study is structured to first provide a clear understanding of the gravity of bias, by looking at the multi-level/cycle of workplace bias and Intersectionality theory. It will then go to explain female behaviour to stress through the transactional model of stress and coping theory. The research methodology will follow a research design and qualitative approach, with a sample group comprised of MBA women of colour from the Wits Business School.

Measures used to validate the data include thematic analysis. Data collection is via a qualitative survey and determined validity and reliability measures used to validate the data. The limitations of the study, future research recourse and conclusion follow.

Literature Review

Introduction

The multi-level gender bias is a model utilised to identify and comprehend bias that exist at various societal levels (Stephens et al.,2021). Stephens et al., (2021) investigated the mechanism and factors that yield the persistence of workplace bias and proposed a mediation for a more inclusive and equal working environments. Jones (2000) proposed that the varied levels of bias are interconnected and interdependent. The factors influencing workplace bias persistence are observed at the organisational, interpersonal, structural, and individual levels, thus approaches towards inclusive societies require multi-level interventions (Stephens et al.,2021). The biases held about race, gender etcetera, at the individual level, manifest at the interpersonal level, in which discrimination from the beliefs, attitudes and stereotyping is observed (Jones, 2000). Bias is further observed in the policies and systems of organisations (institutional level), as well as in the socio-economic systems (structural) (Jones, 2000). The multi-level bias model observes the interaction of these levels and induces interventions at each level to promote awareness and organisational changes (Stephens et al., 2021).

Individuals possess varied social identities that intersect and form experiences of either privilege or discrimination (Collins and Bilge, 2020). According to the framework of Intersectionality, gender is not studied in isolation but intersects with other social identities such as race, class, and ethnicity (Collins and Bilge, 2020). In the context of workplace bias, gender, and race intersectionality acknowledges the Black female, experiences discrimination and barriers in unique ways compared to their male counterparts and other social identities (Rosette et al., 2018). The intersectionality of gender and race in the workplace have an impact on access to opportunity, career advancements and promotion of females. This framework can further inform the policies, structures, and systems to aid promote inclusion and diversity in the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018).

The discrimination experienced by women, particularly of colour, presents difficult working environments that promote unpleasant associations with working. The study on the African American women by Hamilton-Mason et al., (2009) examined the discrimination based on gender and race resulting in the unique experiences of stress and coping mechanisms, and how these mechanisms affect their mental health and well-being. The transactional model or stress and coping addresses precisely this phenomenon. Proposed by Larazus and Folkman in the 1980s, this model highlights how individual interact with their environment in stressful

instances (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). The way an individual perceives their environment and their ability to cope with the stress presented by their environment determines their response (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). This could be an emotional-based or problem-based response, that is, managing stress caused by the environment through social support or tranquil activities or respond by solving the problem presented by the environment, respectively (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). The model comprises of Primary and Secondary appraisals. Individuals initially determine whether a stressor can be considered a threat, where confirmed it causes stress on the individual. This is the Primary appraisal. The Secondary appraisal assesses resource availability to address the stress, when these resources are unavailable, the individual is likely to feel more stressed (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). Therefore, the limited options for work and limited investment in female businesses result in resilient responses of women to workplace stressors (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). These can be observed as emotional-based responses (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). Hamilton-Mason et al., (2009) argue effective interventions and a profound comprehension of policies, systems and structures that address emotional and health disparities faced by women of color (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009).

Understanding the multi-level workplace bias and Intersectionality

For effective interventions to the resistant plague of workplace bias the concepts of multi-level bias and Intersectionality are crucial to comprehend. The cause is intertwined to the impact. The patriarchal history of South Africa caused socio-economic biases that trickled down to individual biases and subsequently to interpersonal and organisational bias (Mkhize, 2013). The idea that advancement of women of color in the workplace will hurt the advancement of other minority groups propels workplace bias and organisational hesitance towards changing policies and systems (Mkhize, 2013). There are limited women of color and empowering programs in South Africa targeted at helping women in management prosper and probe organisations to develop programs that support these women fight against workplace bias. The ‘imbokodo’ narrative weighs heavily on women of color in that they must be strong and tolerate bias (Mkhize, 2013). Organisational bias is self-perpetuating in policies and structures that address bias and discrimination within the workplace (Stephens et al., 2021). Multi-faceted approaches to curb workplace bias include awareness, policy and system changes and the creation of inclusive environments are all revised strategies, which continue to fail in curbing bias but succeed in creating a façade of workplace bias improvements. To successfully curb workplace bias, organisational interventions must

introduce intersectionality as part of their diversity and inclusion approaches. The comprehension of the complexities associated with being a working woman, particularly of colour, forms a crucial part of forming a solution (Collins and Bilge, 2020). The diversity within this demographic alone, is a unique concept. Women of color experience varied discrimination and stereotypes, be it colourism, social class, disability, or even physical appearance within the workplace, in addition to gender and race (Rosette et al., 2018).

Multi-level/cycle of workplace bias

To identify the structure and design of organisations, proactive initiatives meant to curb workplace bias must be implemented from the hiring process, performance evaluations, group dynamics up to the organisational culture. A study by Kaiser et al., (2013) observed the impact of individual and interpersonal level bias on the hiring process and policy of organisations, capable of mitigating the impact through the change of those policies. Rooth, (2018) determined the impact of organisational culture and interventions to reduce bias in the hiring and promotion process within organisation significantly improved inclusion, diversity, and work performance. Bias is a multi-faceted and complex matter, requiring comprehensive strategies and various levels of scrutiny (Rooth, 2018). To effectively address the issue of bias, a high-level analysis will not suffice, intrinsic attention and approach to the complex and onion effects causing bias is mandatory to achieve an equitable workplace for women (Stephens et al., 2021).

Intersectionality matters

Using a variety of research and studies, Rosette et al., (2018) highlights the distinct challenges faced by women of color in the workplace. This demographic is often subjected to stereotyping, which has a negative impact to their career progressions (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Women of color in leadership roles are further subjected to a double standard, where they are expected to both be assertive, something observed to be innate in men, and nurturing an automatic stereotypical norm (Phelan and Rudman, 2010) and (Rosette et al., 2018). Failure for these women to conform to this expectation and norm, they are faced with scrutiny and condemnation (Rosette et al., 2018). The intersection of gender and race identities creates forms of social exclusion and discrimination against women in the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018). It is crucial for organisations to recognise and capitalise on the category of women of color to explicitly understand, address and capitalise on the unique

requirements, skills, and experiences of the varied ethnic groups within the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018).

Female behaviour response to stress through the transactional model of stress and coping

Transactional model of stress and coping

Workplace bias contributes to the stress and coping mechanisms of women in the workplace, in addition, organisational factors such as work-life balance, resources, leadership styles and job design exasperate stress levels in women (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). The study by Trenberth and Dewe, (2004) explored different strategies such as the psychological approach and observational methods to aid measure and evaluate work related stress. Organisational interventions are required at the individual level of workplace bias, to encourage the use of healthy coping mechanism to stress (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). In a study by Hamilton-Mason et al., (2009) forty-six focus interviews were conducted with African American women with varied socio-economic backgrounds and experiences. The study determined that a range of stressors affected this group, similarly a range of coping mechanisms were observed including social support, spirituality, activism, and humour, all within the emotion-focused or problem-focused umbrellas (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). The study by Sunindijo and Kamardeed, (2017) observed both male and female genders within the construction industry and determined that male stressors were unique to them and so were stressors for women. However, the findings from conducted surveys and interviews determined that women experience significant levels of work stress compared to their male counterparts in this industry. Understanding the complexity of work stress and coping mechanism, given the varied personalities and stressors experienced in respective industries, a multi-method approach on the root cause of work stress could benefit organisations in retaining talent previously discriminated against.

Organisational interventions and stress relatability

The Transactional model of stress and coping highlights the vital interplay between individuals and their environments and the impacts that the environment has in shaping the individual's stress experience and utilised coping mechanism (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Models such as the Lazarus and Folkman's model of coping and demand-resource model are studied separately to determine the cause and effects of work stress (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). The Larazus and Folkman model of coping depicts personalities and experiences affect the response used under stress, individuals decide between an emotion-focused and a

problem-focused approach based on who they are and what they have gone through, others use a combination of both (Larazus and Folkman, 1984). An integrated and comprehensive approach to understanding and managing stress is essential to aid reduce the impact of stress on employees, particularly female (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Work demand-resources model posits that the responsibilities and demands required to do work and the resources (or lack thereof) needed by employees constitute to the level of stress and coping of employees (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). This model advises the importance of social and organisational support in promoting the reduction of work stressors. Unfortunately, women are not often on the top list to acquire needed resources, which submerges this demographic into unnecessary work stressors and coping mechanisms.

Theoretical Framework

Workplace bias is multi-level thus varied and comprehensive approaches must be used to address this issue (Stephens et al., 2021). The concept of intersectionality provides a comprehensive review of the connectedness of gender and race experiences of women in the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018). The interconnected yet complex social categories of women posit that they face varied forms of bias and discrimination, which are interdependent thus must be acknowledged in a cooperative manner (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Theoretical concepts such as double jeopardy indicate that women of color face greater bias and discrimination compared to their male counterparts because of the intersection of their gender and race (Rosette et al., 2018). Organisational approaches must address the unique experiences of coloured women and provide resources and support to understanding the intersecting forms of bias experienced by women of color (Rosette et al., 2018). The complex interplay between individuals and their environments can be understood through the application of varied models and theories such as the transactional model of stress and coping (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). Individual judgement of a stressor and resources available to address and cope with that stressor are influenced by varied socio-economic issues and cultural contexts (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). Other theoretical concepts include the concept of resilience, which proposes that individuals adapt and prosper in the face of adversity, utilising coping mechanisms such as humour, activism, spirituality, and self-care (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). There unique and vast ways used by women, particularly of color to cope with workplace stress, Intersectionality, the Transactional model of stress and coping and the Resilience concept all contribute to the framework for understanding the interaction between the individual, workplace stress and coping mechanisms (Hamilton-

Mason et al., 2009) and (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Organisations need to understand the cause of work stressors; job demands, bias, interpersonal conflict etcetera and how to evaluate and measure these stressors (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Furthermore, the contributing organisational factors resulting to work-stress such as their policies, job design and resources (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). The multi-level bias must be unfolded at this stage to provide a comprehensive outlook. Varied stress and coping mechanisms must be monitored and observed, organisations to offer distinctive coping mechanisms that apply to different personality traits and coping behaviours (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009) and (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Implications of workplace bias on the organisation and the individual reduce the total financial and economic contributions, which are achievable in equitable organisations (Jones, 2000).

South Africa has a complex history of institutionalized racism and apartheid, with lasting impact on society and the workforce (Lund and Budlender, 2021). The diverse population comprised of people from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds presents significant disparities in terms of economic opportunities and outcomes for diverse groups (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Gender inequality is also prevalent in South Africa with women facing different forms of discrimination and disadvantage in the workplace (Lund and Budlender, 2021). The intersection of race and gender in the workplace creates unique experiences and challenges for women of color, such as the “double burden” of being both a woman and a person of color (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). It further perpetuates feelings of imposter syndrome and induces anxiety and pressure to conform to a corporate culture that does not serve them well (Lindelwa Skenjana, 2021). Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of race and gender and the way they interact to create unique opportunities and privileges (Collins and Bilge, 2020). In the context of South Africa, the intersectionality of gender and race has a historical and social significance due to the legacy of apartheid and colonialism (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Therefore, this framework will take an intersectional perspective to understand the complex experiences of women of color in the South African workplace and try to determine the research question of how gender and race intersect to influence workplace experiences and opportunities for career advancement among women of color in South Africa.

Impact of South Africa’s history on Intersectionality

Organisations remain oblivious to the impacts of SA's history on women of color, how race and gender intersect to form unique oppressive experiences for women of color (Rosette et al., 2018) and (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Apartheid policies enforced racial segregation and oppression, and gender was also a key factor in how people were categorized and treated (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Socio-economic biases that perpetuate individual biases and subsequently interpersonal and organisational bias are the result of South Africa's history of patriarchy (Mkhize, 2013). Patriarchal perspectives evaluate women as less merit, group reliant and lack firmness due to embedded bias within the workplace systems, structures, and policies (Stephens et al., 2021). As a result, there are limited women of color in managerial positions and limited resources supporting the empowering programs in South Africa targeted at helping women in management prosper and probe organisations to develop programs that support these women fight against workplace bias (Gill, 2014). The 'imbokodo' narrative forces women of color to be strong and tolerate bias (Mkhize, 2013). The lack of social support and historical impacts lead to a range of negative health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009) and (Lindelwa Skenjana, 2021).

South Africa has enacted legislation and policies to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace such as the Employment Equity Act, which requires organizations to actively promote diversity and eliminate discrimination caused by colonialism and apartheid (South African Government, 2013). Research shows only 20%-29% of the women population in South Africa makes up senior level management, while over 50% makes up the total population (Statistics South Africa, 2022). This illustrates that the legacy of apartheid and colonialism has left lasting structural inequalities in the workplace (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Research on intersectionality and workplace bias can aid identify the types of discrimination and barriers that women of color face in the workplace and contribute towards the development of policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Rosette et al., 2018). It would also recognize that the experiences of women of color are not uniform across all individuals who belong to the same marginalized groups but are shaped by their individual circumstances and contexts (Lund and Budlender, 2021). Furthermore, it assists with assessing the effectiveness of initiatives such as the Employment Equity Act and identify areas for improvement (Lund and Budlender, 2021).

The research by (Lund and Budlender, 2021) illustrates the persisting legacy of apartheid and gender discrimination in South Africa's labor market. Utilizing data from varied sources such as the Quarterly Labor Force Survey (QLFS) and the National Income Dynamics Study

(NIDS), this study illustrates the significant discrepancies observed in employment opportunities and pay gaps amongst different race and gender in the South African labour force; 27 years post-apartheid (Lund and Budlender, 2021). However, (Lund and Budlender, 2021) focus on the impact of gender discrimination in the labor market on economic development and social inequality. There are limitations on the impacts of gender discrimination on performance, behavior, and career barriers for women of color within the SA workforce (Lund and Budlender, 2021).

The Impacts of Intersectionality on Workplace Bias

Workplace bias can take many forms, from unconscious biases based on stereotypes and assumptions to overt discrimination and harassment (Stephens et al., 2021). Women of color are particularly vulnerable to workplace bias due to their intersectional identities (Rosette et al., 2018). Studies have shown that women of color are often subjected to microaggressions, such as being mistaken for administrative staff, excluded from networking opportunities, or being held to higher standards than their white male colleagues (Lewis et al., 2017). They are also more likely to be overlooked for promotions, receive lower pay, and face barriers to career advancement (Gill, 2014). Intersectionality can compound the impacts of workplace bias, making it more difficult for women of color to succeed in the workforce (Gill, 2014). For example, a Black woman who is also disabled may face multiple barriers to employment, such as inaccessible workplaces and negative attitudes towards disability (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). Women of color who belong to other marginalized groups, such as those from low-income backgrounds, may also face additional barriers to employment due to their accents or cultural backgrounds, which can be perceived as a lack of professionalism or competence (Lund and Budlender, 2021).

To address workplace bias and intersectionality, it is important to develop strategies that promote equity and inclusion in the workforce (Rosette et al., 2018). One approach is to implement affirmative action policies that seek to increase the representation of women of color in leadership positions and other areas of the workforce (Rosette et al., 2018) and (Stephens et al., 2021). It is also important to create a workplace culture that values and respects diversity, promotes inclusion, and actively works to eliminate bias and discrimination (Rosette et al., 2018) and (Stephens et al., 2021). This can involve training programs for managers and employees, creating employee resource groups, and conducting regular assessments of workplace diversity and inclusion (Rosette et al., 2018). Affirmative

policies could include revamping the Employment Equity Act, which is a legislation that aims to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment (South African Government, 1998). The act requires employers to implement affirmative action measures to address the imbalances of the past and to ensure equitable representation of previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace (South African Government, 1998). The act can include the enforcement of Intersectionality audits, which could be conducted to assess the impact of policies and practices on workers from different intersectional backgrounds and to identify areas for improvement (Brenner, 2016). The Employment Equity Regulations guidelines include provisions for addressing intersectional forms of discrimination, including those based on race, gender, and disability (South African Department of Labour, 2014). This regulation can benefit from incorporating diversity and inclusion training as part of mandatory compliance for organisations. While there is a growing body of literature on intersectionality, based on gender and race in South Africa, there is still a need for further research to better understand the experiences of women of color in the workplace and develop effective interventions to address inequality and discrimination (Lund and Budlender, 2021). This includes research that takes an intersectional perspective, as well as research that examines the impact of specific policies and interventions on women of colour in South Africa (Lund and Budlender, 2021).

The complexity of Intersectionality

Gender and race are two of the most salient aspects of individuals' identities and play a significant role in shaping their experiences in the workplace (Cole, 2009). According to (Cole, 2009) intersectionality has been overlooked in psychology research. (Cole, 2009) argues that psychology research has tended to focus on single categories such as identity, race, or gender without considering the complexity of how identities intersect and interact with each other. This has resulted in an incomplete understanding of how social inequality operates and how it affects individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups (Cole, 2009) and (Collins and Bilge, 2020). (Cole, 2009) highlights examples of research that have successfully incorporated the intersectionality perspective, including studies of experiences of women of color in the workplace. However, this paper is relatively short and provides a brief overview of intersectionality (Cole, 2009). Furthermore, the author does not provide specific recommendations for how researchers can incorporate intersectionality into their research design, limiting the practical functionality of the paper (Cole, 2009). (Cole, 2009) does not address potential challenges and limitations of incorporating an intersectional perspective in

psychology research such as how to account for the complexity of multiple identities and the paper is over a decade old and may not reflect recent developments and debates around intersectionality (Cole, 2009).

A more recent paper by (Rosette et al., 2018) offers a compelling case for the importance of intersectionality in understanding the experiences of women of color and provides solid recommendations for organizations looking to create more inclusive workplaces. Despite the thorough review of diversity and inclusion literature in this paper, it lacks depth in analysis of the structural and systemic factors contributing to the unique experiences of women of color in the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018). Moreover, the sample size utilized in the paper is 122 individuals, limiting the generalization of the findings (Rosette et al., 2018).

Intersectionality on Career Advancement

The intersection of gender and race has a profound impact on the experiences of women of color in the South African workplace (Gill, 2014). Women of color are more likely to experience discrimination and bias than their white and male of color counterparts, thus their experiences are further compounded by additional factors, such as age, education, and social class. Women of color also face significant barriers to career advancement in the South African workplace (Gill, 2014). They are underrepresented in leadership positions and other positions of power and influence and may be excluded from formal and informal networks that facilitate career advancement (Gill, 2014) and (Stephens et al., 2021). This is often due to bias and discrimination, as well as systemic barriers that limit their access to opportunities for career advancement (Gill, 2014). Furthermore, Organizational culture plays a significant role in shaping the experiences and opportunities for career advancement of women of color in the South African workplace (Ely and Thomas, 2001). Organizational culture encompasses the values, beliefs, norms, and practices of an organization, and can either facilitate or hinder diversity, equity, and inclusion (Ely and Thomas, 2001). A workplace culture that values diversity and promotes inclusion can create opportunities for women of color to advance their careers and make meaningful contributions to their organizations (Gill, 2014). On the other hand, a workplace culture that perpetuates bias and discrimination can create significant barriers to career advancement for women of color (Gill, 2014).

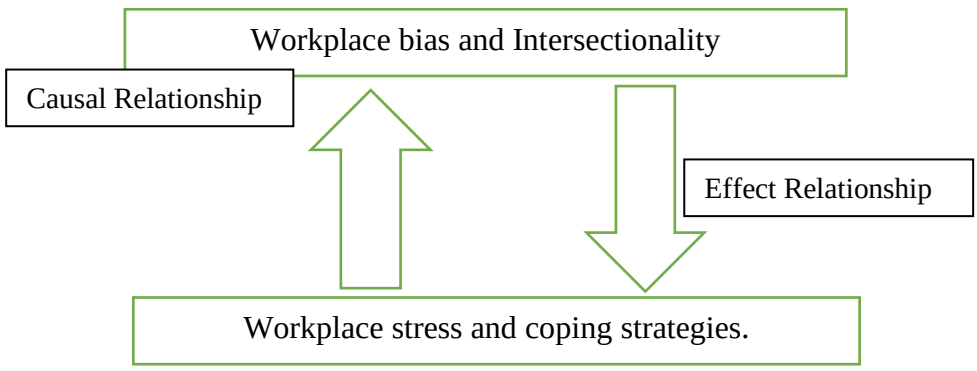
In Conclusion, women of color matter in the South African workforce, and their experiences are shaped by intersectionality and workplace bias (Rosette et al., 2018) and (Stephens et al., 2021). By recognizing the unique challenges faced by women of color and developing

strategies to promote equity and inclusion in the workplace, we can create a more just and equitable workforce those values and respects the contributions of all employees (Gill, 2014). It is important to take an intersectional perspective and develop strategies that promote equity and inclusion (Rosette et al., 2018). Implementing affirmative action policies, creating inclusive workplace cultures, and addressing bias and discrimination at all levels of the organization (Stephens et al., 2021) and (Ely and Thomas, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

The research objectives are achievable through dissecting the bias experienced by women of color in the workplace, by accounting for the patriarchal history of South Africa, and correcting individual biases that become interpersonal. The research aims to understand how the intersection of race and gender, and organisational culture affect women of colour's experiences of workplace bias and coping strategies. Furthermore, intersectionality of women of color is considered to ensure this group's unique experiences and bias in the workplace culture form part of the comprehensive framework to aid rectify organisational bias. A look into the corporate organisation and the stress and coping mechanisms used there will aid determine whether effective interventions are used to reduce emotional impacts of workplace bias. The below conceptual framework below will be used to answer the research questions:

How does the intersection of race and gender and organisational culture affect women of colour's experiences of workplace bias and coping strategies? How can the Black and brown child stop be being the most disadvantaged demographic in South Africa? What role can organisations play to promote equitable working environments that help women of color prosper and grow in management level with limited bias experiences. Are organisations willing to change existent policies to promote the career growth of women of color and offer resources to promote healthy coping strategies for women of colour?



Conclusion

Research has consistently illustrated biases exist at all levels of organisations, from individuals to institutional policies and practises (Stephens et al., 2021). Individual bias influence institutional bias and vice versa. The impact of individual bias led to discriminatory practises within a group, which perpetuate institutional level biases (Kaiser et al., 2013). Multilevel workplace bias lead to reduced productivity, innovation, and career stagnation (Plickert and Sterling, 2017). A comprehensive approach is required to address multilevel workplace bias, organisations are required to invest in individual level bias training and promote diversity and inclusion through institutional policies, systems, and structure changes, that will allow women of color to prosper in their careers without these barriers (Plickert and Sterling, 2017) and (Stephens et al., 2021). Multilevel bias is a continuous barrier and pervasive problem in numerous organisations, despite the research and awareness drives on this issue (Stephens et al., 2021). Therefore, addressing workplace bias requires continuous effort and commitment from all levels of the organisation (Plickert and Sterling, 2017).

Intersectionality recognizes and acknowledges the complexity of identities; intersecting social identities such as race and gender generate unique discriminatory bias and/or privilege experiences (Collins and Bilge, 2020). The intersectionality framework can thus be utilized to develop targeted interventions and policies to address the varied forms of discrimination experienced by women of color in the workplace (Rosette et al., 2018). Intersectionality focuses on the importance of context, understanding the history, culture, and social context perpetuating workplace bias and how these shape individual experiences (Collins and Bilge, 2020). It is crucial organisations consider the patriarchal history and apartheid impacts experienced by women of color in South Africa to aid accurately address bias in workplace (Phelan and Rudman, 2010). Like multilevel bias, intersectionality requires continuous learning and reflection. Employers cannot be oblivious to the impacts of SA’s history on women of color, only through understanding how race and gender intersect to form unique oppressive experiences for women of color, can interventions be effective (Rosette et al., 2018). Continuous education, self-reflection and dialogue can be utilized to improve intersectionality comprehension and practice; helping to reduce workplace bias (Collins and

Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality can create allyship, in that women of color can pull others to promote the success of women in the workplace by reducing barriers created by bias.

Organisations applying an intersectional approach and multi-level analysis to address workplace bias can attract and retain diverse talent of women, for an equitable workplace culture.

The negative impacts of workplace bias create workplace stress on individuals, promote health issues, poor wellbeing, and reduced job performance. Employees rely on coping strategies to manage the impacts of workplace bias (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Research illustrates workplace stress as a pervasive issue affecting majority of the workforce. Work demands, poor social support, bias etcetera particularly on women of color lead to quiet quitting, a range of negative health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). Organisations should invest in cognitive restructuring and social support programs to aid reduce workplace stress. Individuals can invest in relaxation techniques, social and spiritual group support, and physical exercise to reduce stress (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). However, these can be difficult for women of color due to the varied requirements from family, work, and social gathering (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009). Individuals have varied experiences and personalities, thus deal with workplace stress differently. Therefore, it is crucial for organisations to realise coping strategies are not a one-size-fits-all and employers have a role to play in reducing workplace stress (Trenberth and Dewe, 2004). Organisations should invest in adequate resources and support to allow employees opportunities for input, work-life balance support and inclusion in decision-making processes within the organisation; these will help employers create supportive work environments to aid reduce stress and promote employee wellbeing (Hamilton-Mason et al., 2009).

A comprehensive approach to work stress management must encompass individual and organisational level workplace bias and target the root cause of stress not the symptoms.

Research Methodology

An intersectional lens was utilized to frame research questions that explicitly consider the intersections of various social identities and how they shape individual experiences. The research aimed to include participants who belong to multiple marginalized groups to capture the complexity of intersectionality. This involved diverse samples and utilizing sampling

methods that prioritize diversity and inclusion (Rosette et al., 2018). Measures that capture the complexity of intersectionality and account for the interactions between different social identities, such as those that assess multiple identities and examine how they interact with each other, were utilized. Measures included identity, stress, coping, and privilege. Research questions aimed to determine the race, gender, and socioeconomic status of the individuals, then determine the unique stressors due to being members of marginalized groups, and the specific challenges faced. Coping measures aimed to determine the specific coping strategies utilized to manage stressors faced by women of color in the workplace. Privilege measures aimed to determine if there are specific advantages gained in the workplace by being a woman of color. The role of power and privilege within the workplace was investigated to determine how they intersect with social identities; this involved exploring the ways in which power and privilege conferred advantages to certain groups and disadvantages to others.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which aided in gaining a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the ways in which social identities interact to shape individual experiences (Guest et al., 2012). Thematic analysis was utilized to explore the complex phenomena of intersectionality and workplace bias. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns and themes that may not be immediately apparent through regression analysis, providing a richer exploration of the research questions (Guest et al., 2012). The use of thematic analysis aligns with the need for an in-depth and pragmatic research approach suited to the complexity of the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

In the context of this study, which involved the interplay of multiple factors, a methodology that aptly captures the intricate and nuanced aspects of qualitative data was imperative. For this purpose, thematic analysis was employed to delve into the complex relationships and patterns shaping workplace experiences. This approach sought to identify and analyze recurring themes within the data, providing a comprehensive exploration of the qualitative aspects related to workplace outcomes, such as job satisfaction and work-life balance (Guest et al., 2012; Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis process involved a systematic examination of qualitative data, allowing for the discovery of patterns, meanings, and insights relevant to the research questions (Guest et al., 2012). Unlike traditional statistical approaches, thematic analysis is well-suited to uncovering the depth and richness inherent in qualitative data, contributing to a more

profound understanding of the several factors influencing workplace dynamics (Guest et al., 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2021).

This qualitative exploration was instrumental in uncovering the multifaceted nature of workplace experiences and shedding light on the nuances of workplace bias, gender, and race. The process was conducted rigorously to ensure a holistic and contextually relevant interpretation of the data (Terry et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the thematic analysis outcomes played a crucial role in informing strategies and policies aimed at fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. By extracting qualitative evidence on issues such as underrepresentation or discriminatory practices, the study aimed to contribute to the development of targeted interventions that address challenges identified through the thematic analysis process (Guest et al., 2012). The qualitative insights gained provided a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and advocacy for positive workplace changes.

Additionally, validity and reliability were assessed in the context of thematic analysis. Construct validity was employed to examine the relationship between variables and theoretical constructs, ensuring they align with established theories or expected patterns (Hair et al., 2019).

Research Design

Research question: How does gender and race intersect to influence workplace experiences, behaviours, and career advancement opportunities for women of color in South Africa?

Sampling: A representative sample of employees from various industries and job sectors in South Africa was selected.

- The sample included women of color (no Caucasian individuals). Race considered was Black, Indian, and Coloured.
- Age considered was 27-42 years. These individuals are Millennials born between the years 1981-1996, bound by apartheid-era effects and new developments of the South African Freedom Charter. Seventy-eight percent are employed, thus economically active.
- The job level was Upper Management, comprising department heads just below executive management. Majority of influential decisions affecting the entirety of the

firm are made at this level; hence this group was targeted to offer suggestions and solutions for middle management to execute plans and policies that promote inclusion, equality, and reduce stereotyping in the workplace.

- A general sample from varied industries was considered.

Data collection: Qualitative data was collected to fully capture the complexity of the research question. A survey was administered, including questions about workplace experiences, career advancement opportunities, discrimination, and other relevant variables.

Data analysis: The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis models to examine the impacts of gender and race on workplace experiences and career advancement opportunities, while controlling for other relevant variables. Thematic analysis allowed for the identification of patterns and themes that may not be immediately apparent through other forms of analysis, providing a richer exploration of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2021).

Integration: The results from the qualitative data were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender and race intersect to influence workplace experiences and opportunities for career advancement among women of color in South Africa.

Implications: Implications of the findings were discussed, including recommendations for policies or practices to address identified issues. Strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, reducing bias in hiring and promotion decisions, and providing training, resources, and support for underrepresented groups were generated. Findings aimed to inform policy development aimed at addressing systemic inequalities related to gender and race in the South African workplace context (Guest et al., 2012; Nowell et al., 2017).

Data Collection

A survey questionnaire was utilized to gather qualitative data on the prevalence of intersectionality experiences in the workplace, such as experiences of discrimination, microaggressions, and tokenism. Utilizing surveys included both open-ended and close-ended questions to capture the complexity of intersectional experiences and provide a more nuanced understanding of workplace bias. Survey questionnaires provided data that identified patterns, trends, and areas of concern related to race and gender in the workplace, and were distributed to a large sample of respondents, allowing for a more representative sample of the workforce. The standardized measures of survey questionnaires ensured that data was dependable and

valid, which is particularly important when studying intersectionality as the concepts and experiences being measured can be complex and multifaceted. Survey questionnaires were anonymous and confidential, allowing participants to be honest and open about their experiences within the workplace. They were cost-effective in gathering data and could be distributed electronically without the requirement of extensive resources or time to administer.

However, there are limitations to survey questionnaires. Due to the limited set of questions, the survey may not capture the full complexity of intersectionality in the workplace and workplace bias or provide the necessary context to fully understand participants' experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, participants may respond in ways they believe are socially acceptable rather than providing honest and accurate responses. The limited opportunity for follow-up or clarification can reduce the depth of the data collected. To remedy this, the survey questionnaire was carefully put together and clear to reduce the requirement for clarification. Moreover, an ethical and confidentiality disclosure was critical to the questionnaire to allow respondents to be honest in their answers.

Sample and Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to identify and select participants who belong to different racial groups (Indian, Black, and Coloured) and are female in South Africa. This method ensured that the sample represented the diversity of the population and allowed for a thorough analysis of intersectionality and workplace bias in women of color.

There was one standard survey questionnaire comprised of two sections – closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, distributed amongst the MBA students at the Wits Business School. The targeted group of students comprised women of color in senior management levels in their varied industries. The measure was not to determine discrimination in specific industries but the general business environment.

The Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was utilized to gain qualitative data from a sample of 30 MBA students from the Wits Business School, who are Millennials and in senior-level management within their organizations. To determine how gender and race intersect to influence workplace experiences, behaviours, and career advancement opportunities for women of color in South Africa, a survey questionnaire was an effective research instrument in which

data was collected to aid in the accuracy and reliability of the data. Thematic analysis was utilized to gain validity and reliability intel from the data collected. This instrument was cost-effective, did not require a lot of resources, was easily accessible, and had confidentiality and privacy benefits to ensure the sample could express experiences freely.

Procedure for Data Collection

Survey questionnaires were sent via email for ease of access and completion of the questionnaire. From the identified research question, developed research design, and selected research instrument, a process for data collection was based. Prior to the collection of data, ethical clearance was obtained from the Wits Business School Review Board, to ensure ethics and compliance of the research aligned with ethical guidelines. For the sample, the Wits Business School was asked for student emails to allow them to send the survey questionnaire. The correct and necessary processes to obtain the sample email addresses were followed. Students were advised of the confidentiality of the survey, and it was clearly indicated that the data collected was solely for research purposes and benefit of the study.

The chosen sample was presented with the survey questionnaire to collect and store data in an organized manner. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis tools to determine the validity and reliability of the data. The data was reported in a suitable form for a clear and concise presentation and understanding of the data.

Data analysis strategies and interpretation

Thematic analysis stands as a robust qualitative research method, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the intricate ways in which different social identities intersect and collectively shape outcomes within the workplace (Lewis et al., 2017). Unlike statistical approaches, thematic analysis embraces the qualitative dimensions of data, offering a nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by individuals with diverse social identities (Guest et al., 2012).

In the context of intersectionality based on gender and race in the workplace, thematic analysis is poised to offer valuable qualitative evidence to inform policy changes aimed at fostering diversity and inclusion (Lewis et al., 2017). For instance, by revealing patterns of underrepresentation or instances of discrimination against women of color in specific job categories or within fields, thematic analysis contributes qualitative insights that can advocate

for targeted recruitment and retention strategies, thereby promoting a more inclusive workplace environment.

Thematic analysis does not merely complement but enriches the overall understanding of workplace dynamics. The qualitative insights obtained through thematic analysis are pivotal in identifying areas that necessitate policy changes and interventions to address discrimination and promote equity and inclusion. It enables researchers and policymakers to glean a profound understanding of the lived experiences of individuals within the workplace, offering a foundation for qualitative, evidence-based strategies that can enhance workplace diversity and equality.

Furthermore, the outcomes of thematic analysis serve a dual role in holding companies accountable for addressing workplace discrimination. In jurisdictions like South Africa, where laws and policies exist to safeguard employees against discrimination based on race and gender, thematic analysis contributes qualitative evidence that can support legal actions against companies engaging in discriminatory practices (Lewis et al., 2017; Stephens et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of robust qualitative methodologies in complementing legal frameworks and advocating for more effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure workplace equality and justice.

Limitations and challenges of the study

Intersectionality and workplace stress coping mechanisms are complex concepts, involving the interaction between multiple social identities and their behaviors, which can make it challenging to measure the impact of workplace bias and discrimination. Identifying identity measures, stressors, discrimination measures, coping measures, and privilege measures. Using these measures can help researchers gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which social identities interact to shape individual experiences. By capturing the complexity of intersectionality, researchers can develop more comprehensive models of social inequality and identify potential intervention points for promoting equity and inclusion.

Quality Assurance

To ensure reliability and credibility of the research, quality assurance is crucial in measuring the intersectionality and workplace bias in the SA workplace context, this way collected data and analysis is credible and dependable. Quality assurance measures taken include:

- The sample size and data composition of the study. Approximately thirty women of color in the diverse industry fields will be included by means of ensuring sufficient representation.
- Data quality – collected data accuracy and completeness is essential for credible and reliable results. Therefore, double-checking of data entry, validating data against numerous sources and concise data cleaning procedures will be followed.
- Thematic analysis serves as a fitting qualitative method employed to scrutinize the collected data. However, the analysis will be systematically examined for consistency, coherence, and alignment with emerging patterns and themes. This thorough scrutiny aims to ensure the reliability and robustness of the thematic analysis, mitigating potential assumptions and limitations associated with the qualitative approach.
- Interpretation of collected data – clear and concise reporting and interpretation grounded in relevant literature and Intersectionality and Transactional coping model theories will be applied post analysis. Recommendation and policy interventions will be advised thereafter.
- Ethical considerations – research will be conducted in a manner that complies with applicable laws and regulations. A consent request from study participants will include advisement on the protection of their privacy and participant confidentiality. The study will ensure it does not perpetuate existing power imbalances.

Ethical Considerations

Various ethical implications concerning privacy and confidentiality, cultural sensitivity and potential impact on participant occupations will be experienced when asking questions based on intersectionality and workplace bias. Considering privacy and confidentiality is crucial when asking questions on race, gender and workplace environment, such questions require participants to disclose personal information, experiences of discrimination and mental health concerns. Therefore, anonymity of the survey and secure storage of the data will be prioritized to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants. The study will avoid generalization on experiences of women of color to ensure the survey is culturally sensitive. Certain questions may trigger negative experiences of the participants, such as discrimination or stereotyping causing the participant to potentially harm themselves. To remedy this the survey will provide details of the Trauma and Counselling Unit at WBS to support

participants to debrief and gain emotional relief. The study will further avoid perpetuating stereotypes by asking questions that may result in participants feeling stigmatized.

To ensure the research is ethical consent will be requested from all participants prior to data collection. The purpose of the study, nature of questions and potential risks or benefits of the study will be communicated within the introduction of the survey. Participants will be advised they can withdraw from the questionnaire should they at any point feel uncomfortable.

RESULTS

1. Demographic Characteristics

1.1 Racial and Socio-economic Distribution

The survey revealed that race and gender jointly shape workplace perceptions, exerting an influential effect of approximately eighty-four percent. Many of the respondents identified as Black females, with a smaller representation of Indian and Coloured females. Regarding socio-economic status, over half belonged to the upper-middle class, about forty percent to the lower-middle class, and the remaining participants were evenly divided between the lower and upper classes. For example, a Black female professional in engineering navigates challenges associated with both race and gender.

1.2 Professional Background

The sample comprised thirty-one women engaged in diverse South African industries. Of these, twenty-one worked across various sectors, six in finance, and four in engineering. These professionals actively enhanced their skills through participation in the Wits Business School MBA program.

2. Workplace Bias and Intersectionality

2.1 Bias Perception

Among the participants, the majority reported encountering bias related to gender and race, with half of that number expressing negative impacts on their professional lives. Notably, two females reported positive impacts, while the rest experienced disadvantages due to both race and gender. Common biases included unequal pay, denial of promotions, and challenges accessing leadership roles. For instance, a Black female professional encountered challenges receiving unequal pay compared to her male counterpart for the same work. Consequently, this wage disparity created barriers to accessing leadership roles in other organizations, as the lower pay falsely suggested she might not be as qualified for senior positions.

2.2 Influences on Bias

The study identified that over half of the biases stemmed from a lack of respect and recognition for women of color, with forty percent attributed to stereotyping and about thirty percent to prejudice. These biases resulted in half feeling excluded from decision-making roles and thirty-five percent observing a lack of representation in upper management. For

example, stereotyping contributed to the exclusion of sixteen women of color from decision-making positions in this sample group.

2.3 Coping Mechanisms

Regarding coping strategies, a considerable number of women underscored the importance of personal growth and resilience as driving forces that not only motivated them to persevere in the workplace but also contributed to their professional development. Factors such as continuous learning opportunities, mentorship programs, and a supportive work environment further enhanced the effectiveness of these coping mechanisms.

3. Stress Levels and Coping Strategies

3.1 Stress Perception

A significant sixty-seven percent of women experienced microaggressions contributing to workplace stress, yet eighty-four percent did not report these incidents. Notably, most of these women faced a lack of support hindering their professional growth. However, only forty-eight percent reported dissatisfaction with their workplace's efforts to address gender and race issues. For example, fifteen of these women of color faced stress due to a lack of support and inadequate workplace efforts to address diversity issues.

3.2 Impact on Well-being and Productivity

A substantial majority (seventy-one percent) reported higher stress levels compared to their Caucasian colleagues, with eighty-one percent indicating that work-related stress negatively impacted productivity, concentration, and decision-making. A concerning seventy-seven percent reported that stress negatively affected their overall well-being. For instance, one woman experienced compromised well-being and productivity, which threatened her job due to heightened stress levels.

3.3 Seeking Support

Despite the challenges, the majority of the women had not sought resources or support systems for workplace stress. Most were uncomfortable discussing stress with superiors or HR. This reluctance extended to seeking private professional help, with only a few of the sample doing so due to monetary constraints.

3.4 Coping Mechanism and Workplace Recognition

Most of the sample sought support from colleagues, friends, family, and community networks, while others engaged in physical exercise and self-care activities. However, seventy-seven percent felt their workplace did not recognize or value the unique challenges faced by women of color in stress and workload management, and over eighty percent reported a lack of stress reduction initiatives. For example, one woman sought support from her MBA cohort as a response to perceived gaps in workplace recognition, leading her to seek employment elsewhere.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyse recurring themes within the qualitative data. Codes were developed through a systematic review of the responses, leading to the identification of key themes such as bias perception, coping mechanisms, and the impact of stress on well-being and productivity. This approach allowed for the exploration of complex and nuanced patterns in the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the intersectionality of race and gender in shaping workplace experiences for women of color in South Africa.

The themes and codes were formed through an iterative process, where initial codes were refined and grouped into broader themes. This process involved multiple rounds of coding and thematic categorization, ensuring that the analysis captured the depth and richness of the participants' experiences. The thematic analysis provided valuable insights into the pervasive influence of race and gender in the workplace, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to foster inclusivity and equity.

Implications

The findings underscore the pervasive influence of race and gender in shaping workplace experiences for women of color in South Africa. Workplace bias has profound consequences, affecting not only professional advancement but also mental well-being. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive interventions at both individual and organizational levels to foster inclusivity and equity in the workplace. Recommendations include policies to promote diversity and inclusion, reduce bias in hiring and promotion decisions, and provide training, resources, and support for underrepresented groups. These strategies aim to address systemic inequalities related to gender and race in the South African workplace context.

Credibility and Validity

Survey Design and Questionnaire:

The survey was meticulously designed with three distinct segments focusing on demographic characteristics, workplace bias and experiences, and stress levels and coping strategies. The aim was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences of women of color in the South African workforce. The clarity and relevance of questions were ensured through careful consideration and iterative refinement.

Participant Selection:

Wits Business School MBA students were deliberately chosen as participants due to their diverse backgrounds, ruling out educational biases. Their selection aimed to capture a broad spectrum of experiences within the South African corporate landscape. This cohort provided a unique perspective, as they are professionals from various industries and socioeconomic backgrounds, enhancing the study's applicability to a wider context.

Researcher's Positionality:

The researcher-maintained transparency regarding their positionality and potential biases. Acknowledging their role in the research process, efforts were made to minimize subjectivity. Open communication with participants, anonymity in responses, and a commitment to unbiased analysis contributed to the credibility of the study.

Thematic Analysis:

Thematic analysis, a qualitative method, was employed to extract rich, nuanced insights from the data. The iterative nature of the analysis, along with inter-coder reliability checks, ensured the reliability and consistency of identified themes. By leveraging insights from existing studies, the researchers grounded their analysis in established literature, enhancing the study's validity.

Sampling Validity (External Validity):

The sample selection, exclusively from Wits Business School MBA students, was intentional to ensure a diverse representation. While the findings may be particularly applicable to women in similar educational and professional settings, limitations in external validity are acknowledged. This study focuses on a specific group, and generalizability to the broader population is thus constrained.

Data Triangulation:

Data triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of diverse perspectives within the chosen participant group and the use of three distinct questionnaire segments. This multi-faceted approach aimed to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings by capturing a holistic understanding of women of color in the South African workforce.

Reflexivity:

Researchers were cognizant of their influence on the study. Reflexivity was maintained through regular self-awareness checks and transparency about the researchers' background and perspectives. This approach ensured an unbiased interpretation of the collected data and strengthened the overall credibility of the study.

Participant Verification:

While participants' anonymity was preserved, an opportunity for participant verification was not explicitly incorporated due to the anonymous nature of the survey. Nevertheless, the iterative nature of the thematic analysis allowed for continuous feedback and adjustments, contributing to the overall credibility of the study.

In summary, the credibility and validity of this research were strengthened through a thoughtful survey design, careful participant selection, transparent researcher positioning, rigorous thematic analysis, and an acknowledgment of the study's limitations. The deliberate focus on a specific group enhances the depth of insights while emphasizing the need for caution in generalizing findings beyond this context.

DISCUSSION

Workplace Bias Impact

1. Intersectionality and Workplace Bias

The findings from our study underscore the profound impact of intersectionality, where race and gender collectively wield an eighty four percent influence on the perceptions of women in the South African workforce. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the interconnectedness of various social identities, which shape unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). The dominance of Black females in our

sample suggests a concentration of workplace bias, emphasizing the importance of understanding how these intersecting identities contribute to nuanced forms of discrimination (Collins, 2000).

2. Socio-economic and Professional Context

The socio-economic distribution within our sample reveals a middle-class representation, with half from the upper middle class. This is noteworthy as it challenges assumptions that workplace bias is solely a consequence of socio-economic disparities. Despite professional accomplishments, these women encounter bias, emphasizing the need to address systemic issues beyond economic status (Hancock, 2007).

The professionals in the study, enrolled in the Wits Business School MBA program, exemplify a commitment to continuous skill development. This aligns with recommendations from literature emphasizing the role of education and empowerment in challenging workplace bias (Choo & Ferree, 2010).

3. Prevalence and Types of Workplace Bias

Our study unveils a disconcerting reality: seventy four percent of women in the South African workplace experience bias due to gender and race. The consequences of this bias are diverse, with over half reporting negative impacts. Of particular concern is the prevalence of biases such as unequal pay for the same work and in some cases the same qualifications and skill set, denied promotions, and challenges in accessing leadership roles. These findings resonate with previous research highlighting the persistence of gender and racial disparities in career advancement and compensation (Blau & Kahn, 2017). These findings also resonate with studies emphasizing the existence of the “glass ceiling” effect for women of color (Catalyst, 2012). The workplace bias experienced by women in our study aligns with the multi-level bias framework, indicating biases at both individual and institutional levels (Heilman, 2012).

Microaggressions were experienced by thirty six percent of respondents, reflecting a pervasive issue in the South African workplace. These microaggressions contribute to stress and hinder professional growth, substantiating findings from Sue et al. (2007). Stereotyping and prejudice were identified as significant influences on workplace bias, underscoring the need for interventions that address underlying cultural and societal biases (Dovidio et al., 2010).

4. Influences on Workplace Bias

The identified influences on workplace bias highlight the multifaceted nature of discriminatory practices. Lack of respect and recognition and inequality in opportunities and promotions emerged as major contributors. This corroborates with theories emphasizing the role of organizational culture and systemic barriers in perpetuating bias (Martin, 2003).

The underrepresentation of women of color in upper management further amplifies the structural challenges. This aligns with literature highlighting the importance of diverse leadership for fostering inclusive organizational cultures (Catalyst, 2016).

Stress Response Behaviours

1. Coping Mechanisms and Stress Management

The coping mechanisms employed by women of color in response to workplace bias reflect a resilience and determination to overcome adversity. The prioritization of personal growth and resilience and increased motivation indicates a proactive approach to navigating challenges (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). However, the high prevalence of workplace stress suggests that coping mechanisms are not always sufficient. The reluctance to report incidents of bias may stem from fears of retaliation or a lack of faith in existing reporting mechanisms, emphasizing the need for organizational reforms (Smith, 2005). The survey reveals varied coping mechanisms employed by women of color. Seeking support from colleagues, friends, family, and community networks and engaging in physical exercise and self-care activities indicate the importance of social support and personal resilience (Lindelwa Skenjana, 2021). However, concerning is the six females who resort to excessive use of alcohol and/or smoking, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to promote healthier coping strategies.

2. Cultural Context

Differences in stress response behaviours across diverse cultural contexts were not explicitly explored in this study. However, the identified coping mechanisms could be influenced by cultural factors, as suggested by studies emphasizing the role of culture in shaping stress and coping strategies (Martin, 2003).

Organisational Intervention

1. Workplace Support and Dissatisfaction

The lack of support reported by majority of women is alarming, given its implications for frustration and hindered professional growth. This underscores the urgency for organizations to create supportive environments through mentorship programs, diversity training, and equitable policies (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

While half expressed notable discontent with the workplace's initiatives to tackle gender and race concerns, a considerable portion, around forty nine percent, indicated a neutral stance. This suggests a potential gap in communication or awareness, highlighting the importance of fostering open dialogues between employees and employers (Nkomo, 1992). Organizational interventions must be comprehensive to address the multifaceted challenges faced by women of color. The thematic analysis underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the unique challenges these women encounter in the workplace. The lack of representation in decision-making roles indicates the need for organizational initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion (Rosette et al., 2018). Dissatisfaction with existing efforts emphasizes the imperative for more effective, targeted interventions.

2. Stress Reduction Initiatives

The thematic analysis highlights a glaring gap in stress reduction initiatives, with twenty-five of the women indicating a lack of such programs specifically designed for women of color. Effective organizational interventions must include targeted stress reduction initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by this demographic.

3. Health and Well-being Consequences

The impact of workplace bias on the mental health of women of color is a critical concern. A substantial majority reported negative impacts on productivity and performance. The reported prevalence of insomnia and increased substance consumption underscores the need for workplace interventions prioritizing mental health (Golden-Kreutz & Lutgendorf, 2007).

Recommendations for Change

The findings call for comprehensive interventions at both individual and organizational levels. Initiatives should include targeted diversity and inclusion training, mentorship programs, and transparent reporting mechanisms. Stress response behaviours vary, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive interventions as well. Effective organizational measures must address biases at multiple levels, considering the unique challenges posed by intersectionality. The study calls for proactive efforts to create an inclusive and supportive

work environment, fostering the professional growth and well-being of women of color. This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of women of color in the South African workforce. It is imperative for organizations, policymakers, and researchers to collaboratively address these challenges to create workplaces that are truly equitable and inclusive.

CONCLUSION

This research endeavours to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women of color in the South African workforce, examining multi-level biases, employing intersectionality theory, and exploring coping strategies. The study, conducted among Wits Business School MBA students, yields valuable insights into the complex interplay of race and gender bias, the consequences of such biases, and the coping mechanisms employed by these women.

The study unequivocally establishes that multi-level bias, influenced by race and gender, permeates the experiences of women of color in the South African workforce. These biases manifest across various dimensions, from unequal pay and denied promotions to challenges in accessing leadership roles. Intersectionality theory provides a lens through which to understand the intricate ways in which these biases intersect, creating unique and compounded forms of discrimination.

The use of thematic analysis proved instrumental in uncovering nuanced patterns and insights from the data. The three-fold research questions — exploring demographic characteristics, workplace biases, and coping strategies — were effectively addressed through the qualitative methodology, providing depth and context to the experiences of women of color.

The demographic portrait reveals a diverse group of women, primarily Black, reflecting various socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the prevalence of workplace bias is stark, affecting 74.2% of the sample. The biases are far-reaching, impacting career trajectories, well-being, and overall professional experiences.

In-depth analysis indicates that biases are significantly influenced by a lack of respect, recognition, and unequal opportunities. Stereotyping and prejudice also contribute, painting a vivid picture of the intricate dynamics that underlie the biases faced by women of color. These biases, in turn, influence the representation of women of color in decision-making roles, with only 37.8% observed in upper management.

Coping strategies vary, with a substantial portion of women seeking support from networks and engaging in self-care activities. However, the lack of proactive support from organizations is evident, leading to dissatisfaction among a considerable proportion of participants. Stress levels are high, impacting productivity and overall well-being.

The findings underscore the urgent need for organizational reforms and societal awareness campaigns. Recommendations include the implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives, targeted support systems for women of color, and the fostering of an inclusive culture. Organizations should actively address biases, provide avenues for reporting and resolution, and offer comprehensive support to mitigate the impact of stress on women of color.

While this study sheds light on critical aspects of the experiences of women of color, there is a need for further research to explore the long-term impacts of workplace biases, the effectiveness of organizational interventions, and the role of allies in creating inclusive workplaces. Future studies could also delve into the intersectionality of other social identities, such as sexual orientation and disability, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by diverse groups of women in the workforce.

In conclusion, this study serves as a call to action. It highlights the urgent need for transformative changes within organizations to eradicate biases, promote inclusivity, and create environments where women of color can thrive. By addressing the multi-level biases and embracing the principles of intersectionality, organizations can foster a workplace that recognizes and values the unique contributions of women of color, contributing to a more equitable and just society. The research points towards a future where workplace environments are not only diverse but truly inclusive, allowing every individual to realize their full potential.

Appendices

Survey Questionnaire

Identity (Pick one):

Which racial/ethnic group(s) do you identify with?

Which gender do you identify with?

Socioeconomic status (Pick one):

Upper Class, Upper Middle, Lower Middle, Upper Lower, Lower

What industry are you in? (Pick one):

Engineering, Finance or in HR

If not, kindly specify your industry.

Stress:

Have you ever experienced bias, discrimination, or prejudice because of your race and/or gender? (Pick one):

Yes

No

I. Personal Experiences in the Workplace

A. Race and Gender Impact

1. Have you ever experienced advantages or disadvantages because of your race and/or gender in your workplace?
    - Yes
    - No
2. If "Yes" to the previous question, please indicate the nature of the experiences you have had.
    - Advantages due to race
    - Advantages due to gender

- Disadvantages due to race
- Disadvantages due to gender

B. Barriers and Biases

3. Have you encountered any barriers or biases in your workplace due to your race and/or gender?
    - Yes
    - No
4. If "Yes" to the previous question, please indicate the types of barriers or biases you have encountered.
    - Lack of promotions or career advancement opportunities
    - Pay disparities.
    - Microaggressions or discriminatory remarks
    - Exclusion in decision-making processes
    - Limited access to professional networks and mentorship
    - Other (please specify): _____

C. Workplace Satisfaction

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the efforts made by your workplace to address issues related to race and gender equality?
    - 1 - Very Dissatisfied
    - 2 - Dissatisfied
    - 3 - Neutral
    - 4 - Satisfied
    - 5 - Very Satisfied
6. Have you ever reported incidents of discrimination or bias based on your race and/or gender in your workplace?

- Yes
- No

7. If "Yes" to the previous question, please indicate the outcome of your reporting.
    - Positive resolution and action taken.
    - No action taken.
    - Negative consequences for reporting
    - Still under investigation
    - Other (please specify): _____

D. Racial Bias and Discrimination

8. Have you experienced any of the below racial bias and/or discrimination situations in the workplace? (Pick all applicable to you)
    - Treated unfairly (limited access to resources)
    - Being denied promotions or opportunities for advancement
    - Experienced microaggressions
    - Being paid less than male counterparts
    - Facing challenges in accessing leadership positions
    - Overlooked for training and development opportunities.
9. Which of these challenges do you face at work because you are a woman of color? (Pick all applicable to you)
    - Feeling isolated or marginalized
    - Being excluded from decision-making roles
    - Being overlooked for career advancement opportunities

E. Double-Burden Effect

10. Have you ever experienced the double-burden effect in which your workplace has/had expectations for you to fulfil both work-related responsibilities and traditional gender roles associated with caregiving and household duties?

- Yes
- No

11. Have you experienced the following?

- Being asked to behave according to stereotypical gender perspective.
- Criticized for being assertive, driven, and dominating.
- Criticized for NOT being assertive, driven, and dominating.
- Select the appropriate response for each question.

II. Personal Reflections on Race and Gender in the Workplace

A. Impact of Race and Gender

12. How has your race and/or gender affected your experiences in the workplace?

- Positively
- Negatively
- No significant impact
- Not applicable (I have not experienced any impact related to my race and/or gender)

13. If "Positively" or "Negatively," provide specific examples or instances that support your response.

14. Have you encountered any specific challenges or opportunities in the workplace related to your race and/or gender?

- Yes
- No

15. If "Yes," provide details of the challenges or opportunities you have encountered.

16. Do you feel that your race and/or gender has influenced the way you are perceived or treated by colleagues or superiors in the workplace?

- Yes
- No

17. If "Yes," indicate the nature of the influence. (Select all that apply)

- Prejudice or bias
- Stereotyping
- Lack of respect or recognition
- Inequality in opportunities or promotions
- Other (please specify): _____

18. Have you experienced a lack of support that could potentially hinder your professional growth?

- Yes / No

19. Have you experienced a lack of support that could potentially contribute to feelings of frustration and stress in the workplace?

- Yes / No

20. Which of the following advantages do you find most significant as a woman of color? (Select all that apply)

- Increased cultural diversity awareness and appreciation.
- Access to unique perspectives and insights.
- Opportunities for personal growth and resilience.
- Building strong networks within the community of women of color.
- Increased motivation and drive to break barriers.
- Other (please specify): _____

21. Have you encountered any specific challenges or disadvantages as a woman of color? If yes, please specify:

- Yes
- No

22. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it for you to embrace and celebrate your identity as a woman of color?

- 1 - Not Important
- 2 - Somewhat Important
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Important
- 5 - Very Important

23. Are there any other advantages or experiences you would like to mention related to being a woman of color? If yes, please provide details:

- Yes
- No

III. Coping Strategies for Work-Related Stress

A. Coping Strategies

24. Which of the following coping strategies have you found most effective in managing work stress? (Select all that apply)

- Seeking social support
- Engaging in physical exercise
- Practicing mindfulness or meditation
- Setting clear boundaries
- Taking regular breaks
- Other (please specify): _____

25. Have you tried any additional coping strategies not mentioned above? If yes, please specify:

- Yes
- No

26. On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your current coping strategies for managing work stress?

- 1 - Very Dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very Satisfied

27. Are there any other coping strategies or techniques you would like to suggest for managing work stress? If yes, please provide details:

- Yes
- No

28. Have you encountered any specific challenges or barriers in implementing the strategies mentioned above? If yes, please specify:

- Yes
- No

29. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it for you to address and manage stress related to your race and gender?

- 1 - Not Important
- 2 - Somewhat Important
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Important

- 5 - Very Important

30. Are there any other strategies or techniques you would like to suggest for managing stress related to your race and gender? If yes, please provide details:

- Yes
- No

IV. Stress Management: Gender and Race

A. Gender-related Stress Management

31. Which of the following coping strategies have you found most effective in managing work-related stress related to your gender?

- Seeking support from colleagues and friends.
- Engaging in self-care activities.
- Setting boundaries and prioritizing tasks.
- Seeking professional help or counselling.
- Other (please specify): _____

B. Race-related Stress Management

32. Which of the following coping strategies have you found most effective in managing work-related stress related to your race?

- Participating in cultural or community activities.
- Engaging in conversations about race with colleagues.
- Practicing mindfulness or meditation techniques.
- Taking breaks or vacations to disconnect from work.
- Other (please specify): _____

C. Combined Race and Gender-related Stress Management

33. Which of the following coping strategies have you found most effective in managing combined race and gender-related stress at work?

- Engaging in diversity and inclusion initiatives at work.
- Joining or creating support groups for individuals with similar experiences.
- Advocating for yourself and others facing similar challenges.
- Educating colleagues and promoting awareness about race and gender issues.
- Other (please specify): _____

34. Are you currently implementing any of the mentioned strategies to manage work-related stress related to your race and gender?

- Yes
- No

35. If yes, which strategy(s) have you found to be the most effective? (Select all that apply)

- Gender-related stress management strategies
- Race-related stress management strategies
- Combined race and gender-related stress management strategies

36. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective do you find the strategy(s) you have implemented in managing work-related stress related to your race and gender?

- 1 - Not effective at all
- 2 - Slightly effective
- 3 - Moderately effective
- 4 - Highly effective
- 5 - Extremely effective

37. Have you sought any support or resources provided by your organization specifically addressing work-related stress related to your race and gender?

- Yes
- No

38. If yes, please describe the support or resources you found helpful.

39. Overall, how satisfied are you with the support provided by your organization in managing work-related stress related to your race and gender?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

40. How does work-related stress make you feel? (Select all that apply)

- Anxious
- Overwhelmed
- Irritable
- Exhausted
- Depressed
- Other (please specify): _____

41. How does work-related stress affect your productivity and performance? (Select all that apply)

- Decreases my productivity.
- Reduces my ability to concentrate.
- Impairs my decision-making skills.
- Increases the number of errors I make.
- Other (please specify): _____

42. When experiencing work-related stress, how do you typically cope with it? (Select all that apply)

- Taking short breaks throughout the day
- Engaging in deep breathing exercises or relaxation techniques

- Seeking support from colleagues or friends
- Engaging in physical exercise
- Other (please specify): _____

43. How frequently do you experience physical symptoms due to work-related stress? (Select one)

- Rarely or never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

44. Which of the following behaviours have you exhibited because of work-related stress? (Select all that apply)

- Increased absenteeism or tardiness
- Difficulty sleeping or insomnia.
- Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, or tobacco
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Other (please specify): _____

45. Has work-related stress affected your personal relationships outside of work?

- Yes
- No

46. If yes, how has work-related stress impacted your personal relationships? (Select all that apply)

- Increased conflicts or arguments
- Reduced quality time spent with loved ones.
- Difficulty maintaining relationships.

- Other (please specify): _____

47. Have you sought any professional help or counselling to cope with work-related stress?

- Yes
- No

48. If yes, did professional help or counselling have a positive impact on your ability to manage work-related stress?

- Yes, significantly!
- Yes, somewhat.
- No, not at all!

Overall, how would you rate the level of support and resources provided by your organization to address work-related stress?

a) Excellent

b) Good

c) Fair

d) Poor

e) Very poor

Thank you for your participation! Your responses will contribute to our understanding of the impact of race and gender on workplace experiences and coping mechanisms.

Figure 1: Survey Questionnaire Sample

Topic	**Start date**	**End Date**	
Do Women of color matter in the SA workforce? Effects of workplace bias	15-May-23	28-Feb-24	
Tasks	**Proposed start date**	**Duration**	**Proposed end date**
Research Proposal submission and Ethics Initial Application - to Supervisor	15-May-23	11 days	26-May-23
Research Proposal submission and Ethics Application form and supporting documents - to Ulwazi	26-May-23	9 days	05-Jun-23
Panel Presentation and Panel feedback	05-Jun-23	39 days	21-Aug-23
Ethics Application form and supporting documents submission post title approval	07-Aug-23	Until Approval (ETC - 24 days)	31-Aug-23
Data Collection	Dependent on ethics approval (ETS - 09 Aug 2023)	45 days	25-Sep-23
Data Analysis	Dependent on data collection (ETS - 25 Sep 2023)	30 days	25-Oct-23
Reporting	Dependent on Data analysis (ETS - 25 Oct 2023	30 days	25-Nov-23
Revising and Finalising Report			08-Feb-24

Figure 2: Proposed schedule and timelines of Research Project

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